

History of Teaching and Learning in University College Cork

Another fortuitous part of the SoTL and Ionad Bairre jigsaw was the presence of Prof. Nona Lyons in UCC in the 2000/01 academic year, as a visiting scholar, where she facilitated the introduction of the teaching portfolio in the Education Department, to harness the reflective work of beginning teachers on the then Higher Diploma in Education (now the Postgraduate Diploma in Education). Professor of Education, Aine Hyland saw the potential of the teaching and course portfolios as ways of supporting Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) within the university as a whole and invited Professor Lyons to conduct a series of seminars with academic staff to compliment the launch of the President's Awards' scheme. (2001-2006ff)

Ionad Bairre, The Teaching and Learning Centre here at UCC, was inspired by the work of Professor Emeritus of Education, Aine Hyland, and co- founded by Drs. Bettie Higgs and Marian McCarthy, in 2006, to support staff/postgraduate student development in teaching and learning in higher education. The Irish name of the centre is a translation of the first part of the college motto "Where Finbarr Taught let Munster Learn". The full Irish version reads 'Ionad Bairre, Sgoil na Mumhan'; literally: 'The Place of Finbarr, the School of Munster' and is the first representation of the college crest that staff and students encounter as they pass through the main gates of UCC on the Western Rd. Our choice of Ionad Bairre –‘the place of Finbarr’- is our way of capturing the dynamic relationship and synergy between teaching and learning and their centrality in any research process regarding disciplinary understanding. The founding of Ionad Bairre is grounded in a history that embedded teaching and learning in the culture of UCC from the bottom up.

UCC had the first Teaching Development Unit in the Republic, set up in 1984, to provide courses to support university teaching. Though its influence waned in the early 1990s, it was instrumental in providing innovative approaches (Hyland, 2002), heightening the profile of teaching and learning and creating a network of colleagues that later informed the first national colloquium of the Irish University Association on teaching and learning in higher education in the late 1990s. By 1999, there was a new emphasis on training development at UCC, which came with the expansion of the Department of Human Resources, where teaching was again taken seriously at the institutional level. Since then, the movement has shifted from the training model to a broader concept of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), to the unfolding of a research agenda for teaching and learning that has opened up an array of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) perspectives, now central to the vision and mission of Ionad Bairre. The realisation that ‘going public’ has as much to do with real conversations about

teaching and learning on campus, as with conference papers, has been helpful in unveiling a SoTL continuum along which our staff (who are our students), and our postgraduate students who also teach, can align themselves- a point central to our current research strategy. ...

Another fortuitous part of the SoTL and Ionad Bairre jigsaw was the presence of Prof. Nona Lyons in UCC in the 2000/01 academic year, as a visiting scholar, where she facilitated the introduction of the teaching portfolio in the Education Department, to harness the reflective work of beginning teachers on the then Higher Diploma in Education (now the Postgraduate Diploma in Education). Hyland saw the potential of the teaching and course portfolios as ways of supporting SoTL within the university as a whole and invited Lyons to conduct a series of seminars with academic staff to compliment the launch of the President's Awards' scheme. Though the latter was an extrinsic motivating factor for some, there was also the internal motivator of better teaching and student learning. Lyons provided three seminars in the Spring of 2001 entitled *Interrogating, Documenting and Representing SoTL: Portfolio Options*, which provided a forum for academic staff to explore SoTL and its central questions regarding the representation of good teaching and the evidence of student learning. These seminars continued into the next academic year, with Lyons returning in the Autumn of 2002. During the academic years of 2001 and 2002, 40 staff presented their portfolio entries to their colleagues, in the public forum of a seminar series, and 23 staff chose to present their portfolios for the President's Awards for Excellence in Teaching. This was a testament to the growing interest in SoTL across the disciplines in UCC at that time which paved the way for the Accredited Programme and the founding of Ionad Bairre. Since 2002, much has been done to promote SoTL at UCC through publication, certification and professional development programmes. In reviewing the work of the early years, Hyland (2002) points to the development of key courses/seminar series that were to be funded during a five year plan to support teaching development. The Human Resources (2003) Staff Training and Development Handbook, published annually, is a useful reference point in highlighting such Training of Trainers courses and seminars given throughout the past decade, marking the SoTL potential present in the work.

The Accredited Programme in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education was approved in 2002, and the 2003-4 academic year produced the first recipients of a Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education- 57 of them in total, with a key focus on researching teaching and developing a SoTL pathway. A teaching and learning support programme is also in place, growing out of the portfolio seminar series run by Dr. Bettie Higgs since 2002. This provides a powerful vehicle for SoTL, allowing for visiting speakers and contemporary issues to be included annually, creating a forum for discussion and opportunities to widen our community of scholars.

Inspired by Hyland's vision, then, the founding of Ionad Bairre, the Teaching and Learning Centre in 2006, consolidated the SoTL effort in UCC, giving teaching and learning in higher education a status and public face as an academic research centre.